

Human settlements was discussed in plenary and was one of the few subjects that was of equal and growing interest to both developed and developing countries. During formal interventions most delegates spoke to the importance of having urban issues as a separate Agenda 21 chapter. Some delegates also stressed that it was important not to forget rural human settlements.

The European Community pointed to the fact that cities were growing at an explosive rate around the world. Thus cities should be looked at both as fast growing problems and also as engines for social and economic development and growth. They pointed to the key role played by the UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and gave support to the UNCHS proposed 1997 Conference on Human Settlements.

The EC also noted that energy and transport were key issues to consider with respect to cities and supported the proposals made in PC 43 for programmes in these areas. They welcomed programmes proposed for adequate shelter for all, human settlements management and land resource management. They called for strengthening existing programmes of UNDP, UNCHS and the Urban Management Programme of the World Bank to implement such programmes.

The Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) spoke to the plenary. He highlighted 7 main programme areas to be included in Agenda 21, namely adequate housing for all, provision of infrastructure, provision of affordable and environmentally friendly energy supply and transportation services, management of land resources, development of construction capabilities, human resource and capacity building and better planning and management of human settlements. He also reinforced the call for a human settlements conference to be held in 1997.

The Kenya delegation agreed that urbanization was an inevitable part of the development process but urged the meeting not to forget rural areas since in many poor countries a large sector of the population still lives in the rural areas. The Nordic countries echoed the European Community's support for UNCHS and emphasized the importance of building a safe living environment for all, the need to improve and transfer construction technologies, the need for land use planning and integrated settlements management. They made particular reference to the cross sectoral nature of the issue especially with respect to land management, fresh water resources, coastal area management and waste management. Thus human settlements should not only be a separate Agenda 21 chapter but it would be necessary to review the issue with respect to the other Agenda 21 items.

Germany announced that they were ready to convene an International Conference on Strategies for the Improvement of the Urban Environment in Berlin in February 1992 to exchange views and to provide options for Agenda 21.